

## Rites Of Passage

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Text: Joshua 5:1-12 (NIV)

**5** Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed over, their hearts melted in fear and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.

### **Circumcision and Passover at Gilgal**

**2** At that time the Lord said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again.” **3** So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth.

**4** Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the wilderness on the way after leaving Egypt.

**5** All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness during the journey from Egypt had not.

**6** The Israelites had moved about in the wilderness forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the Lord. For the Lord had sworn to them that they would not see the land he had solemnly promised their ancestors to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.

**7** So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way.

**8** And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed.

**9** Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the place has been called Gilgal <sup>f</sup> to this day.

**10** On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover.

**11** The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain.

<sup>12</sup> The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.

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## Background:

The Israelites have crossed over the Jordan River as a result of God's miraculous power. The Amorite and Canaanite kings heard about what God had done when the Lord dried up Jordan and their hearts became fearful and they couldn't face the Israelites.

From a natural perspective you would think that this would be a time to go into the land and dispossess the enemy while they are fearful. But God had other plans. God's thoughts are not our thoughts and his ways are not our ways. His thoughts and ways are higher than ours that's why we need to trust him with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding. In all our ways we must acknowledge him and he will direct our paths.

The Israelites have come at a place called Gilgal (Rolling - Full Circle) and God is about to perform a rite of passage. Why pause for a rite of passage and not just run ahead and take on the trembling enemy? It's because this is a pivotal moment of transition.

rite of passage - definition

noun plural noun: rites of passage

1. a ceremony or event **marking** an important stage in someone's life, especially birth, puberty, marriage, and death. "the novel depicts the state of adolescence and the rites of passage that lead to adulthood"

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## Two Essential Actions

### 1. Circumcision - Joshua 5:2-5, 8-9 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again." <sup>3</sup> So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth.

<sup>4</sup> Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the wilderness on the way after leaving Egypt.

<sup>5</sup> All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness during the journey from Egypt had not.

<sup>8</sup> And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed.

<sup>9</sup> Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the place has been called Gilgal <sup>f</sup> to this day.

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## The meaning and Importance of Circumcision

### What Is Circumcision?

Circumcision is the surgical removal of the prepuce, or foreskin, of a male. The word *circumcise* literally means “**to cut around.**”

### The Importance of Circumcision:

Circumcision was the **physical sign** of the covenant God made with Abraham. Gen.17:1-17 (NLT)

**17** When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life.

**2** I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

**3** At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him,

**4** “This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations!

**5** What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham,<sup>[a]</sup> for you will be the father of many nations.

**6** I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

**7** “I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants<sup>[b]</sup> after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

**8** And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.”

## The Mark of the Covenant

**9** Then God said to Abraham, “Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility.

**10** This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised.

**11** You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you.

**12** From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased.

**13** All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant.

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## **Circumcision was a mark that there was a relationship and responsibilities between God and his people.**

In the Old Testament, there was recognition that physical circumcision was not enough. Moses commanded the Israelites in [Deuteronomy 10:16](#) to circumcise their *hearts*, and even promised that God would do the circumcising ([Deuteronomy 30:6](#)). Jeremiah also preached the need for a circumcision of the heart ([Jeremiah 4:4](#)).

### **Deut.10:16 (ESV)**

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

### **Deut. 30:6 (ESV)**

**6** And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

## Joshua 5:9

<sup>8</sup> And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed.

<sup>9</sup> Then the Lord said to Joshua, “**Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.**” So the place has been called Gilgal <sup>f</sup> to this day.

**We must let God do the inner work in our lives and not resist the process because He wants us healed and whole.**

**This act of circumcision marks a transition point where the Israelites go from being slaves to sons. They are God’s children.**

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## 2. Celebration of Passover

### Joshua 5:10-12

<sup>10</sup> On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites **celebrated the Passover.**

<sup>11</sup> The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain.

<sup>12</sup> The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.

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## Passover definition

**Passover** is a sacred observance in Judaism that commemorates the climactic 10th plague in the book of Exodus, when the Lord punishes Egypt by killing all the firstborn but “passes over” (the firstborn of Israel (Exod 12:12–13), resulting in the Israelites’ deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Exod 12:14–17).

Passover broke the bondage of slavery and released the Israelites to move toward their destiny. The reproach is removed and God stopped the manna.

Manna is survival food and is only needed for wilderness dwellers. Canaan was described as the land that flows with milk and honey. The Israelites now entered the land where they had to take responsibility to harvest the blessings of God.